



Winter Use of the Virginia Creeper Trail: A Preliminary Analysis

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June 25, 2003



Sponsors

- ❖ Virginia Creeper Club
- ❖ Virginia Trails
- ❖ Virginia Dept Conservation & Recreation
- ❖ Virginia Dept Forestry
- ❖ National Park Service
- ❖ Creeper Cabins
- ❖ University of Georgia, Dept Ag & Applied Econ
- ❖ USDA Forest Service, Region 8 & SRS



Objectives

- ❖ **Measure Trail Use**
- ❖ **Describe Trail Users**
- ❖ **Examine User Attitudes/ Preferences**
- ❖ **Estimate Local Economic Impacts**
- ❖ **Estimate Visitor Economic Benefits**



Methods

❖ Stratified Random Sample

- ❖ Sites, Days, Season

❖ Exit Interviews

- ❖ Screener

- ❖ Local, Nonlocal A& B



Screeners

- ❖ 681 completed screeners
- ❖ 373 at Abingdon - 55%
- ❖ 212 at Damascus - 31%
- ❖ 36 at Straight Branch 5%
- ❖ 60 at remaining sites 9%



Screener

❖ Activity/Mode:

Walk - 41%

Bike - 31%

Jog - 14%



Screeners

❖ Demographics:

Race: 98% white

Gender: 70% male

Ages: 96% >16

Locals: 60%



Screenener

- ❖ Ave. group size - 2.45
- ❖ 347 screened were surveyed – 51%
- ❖ Reasons for not completing survey
 - no time - 94
 - no interest - 48
 - already surveyed - 47



Screeners Survey

❖ **Most Prolific Surveyors:**

Michelle - 80

Brook - 69

Steve – 58**



Entering Sites

Locals

Abingdon - 70%

Damascus - 9%

Watauga - 8%

13 min avg.

Nonlocals

Abingdon - 37%

Whitetop - 27%

Damascus - 22%



Primary Activity

Locals

Walking - 55%

Biking - 18%

Jogging - 15%

Non-locals

Biking - 56%

Walking - 36%

Jogging - 5%



Trail Time & Distance

	<u>Locals</u>	<u>Nonlocals</u>
❖ Time on Trail:	76 min	143 min
	0 – 660	0 - 480
❖ Distance Traveled:	4.8 mi	18.5 mi
	0 – 51	0 - 500



Group Size & Visits

	<u>Locals</u>	<u>Nonlocals</u>
❖ Group Size:	1.78	3.63
	1 - 20	1 - 46
❖ Visits	12 mo	14 yr
	1 - 45	0 - 300



Local Use by Season

- ❖ 98% use trail in summer
- ❖ 97% use trail in fall
- ❖ 97% use trail in spring
- ❖ 95% use trail in winter



Local Spending

❖ Spending related to trail use

\$ 180 yr/avg.

3/4 reported 75-100% in Grayson or
Washington Co.



Trail Benefits

High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

	<u>Local</u>	<u>Nonlocal</u>
Health:	3.87	3.71
Nature:	3.81	3.80
Pets:	2.33	2.30
Comm:	3.47	3.15



Trail Issues:Locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Safety:	3.71	3.46
Crowd:	3.05	3.35
Parking:	3.11	3.36
Scenery:	3.84	3.65



Trail Issues: Locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Restrooms:	3.23	3.20
Conflicts:	3.01	3.41
Surface:	3.60	3.16
Structure:	3.70	3.48



Trail Issues: Non-locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Safety:	3.85	3.53
Crowd:	3.23	3.51
Parking:	3.21	3.46
Scenery:	3.90	3.73



Trail Issues: Non-locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Restrooms:	3.30	3.33
Conflicts:	3.14	3.63
Surface:	3.51	3.50
Structure:	3.50	3.50



Area Features: Locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Lodge:	1.5	3.09
Trail Camp:	1.75	2.67
Campgrounds:	1.80	2.80
Eating:	2.53	3.03
Shopping:	1.80	2.90



Area Features: Locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Historical:	2.72	3.25
Outdoor:	3.05	3.36
Bike rentals:	2.29	3.33
Guides:	1.63	2.64



Area Features: Non-locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Lodge:	2.30	3.30
Trail Camp:	2.30	3.05
Campgrounds:	2.23	2.87
Eating:	3.20	3.23
Shopping:	1.93	2.90



Area Features: Non-locals

Imp: High=4, Med=3, Low=2, None=1

Cond: Excel=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1

	<u>Importance</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Historical:	2.70	3.15
Outdoor:	3.23	3.50
Bike rentals:	2.50	3.42
Guides:	1.83	3.10
Information:	3.06	3.31



Management Opinions

Percent = Strongly Agree & Agree

	<u>Local</u>	<u>Nonlocal</u>
❖ maint attract visitors	99 %	99 %
❖ user fee for maintenance	32	59
❖ local taxes maintenance	91	74
❖ volunteers main maintenance	65	77
❖ crowding affects visits	39	35



Trail Surfaces

Percent = Strongly Support & Support

	<u>Local</u>	<u>Nonlocal</u>
Paved:	8%	8%
Cinder:	79	79
Limestone:	55	54



Trail Uses

	<u>Local</u>		<u>Nonlocal</u>	
	All	Disabled	All	Disabled
❖ electric golf carts	3%	46%*	1%	40%*
❖ gas golf carts	1	14	0	20
❖ motorized bicycles	4	14	1	14
❖ horse drawn carts	11	8	11	11
❖ ATV's	1	2	0	6



Household Demographics

	<u>Locals</u>	<u>Nonlocals</u>
Household size	2.6	3.1
College education	63%	63%
Respondent age	48	47
Employ full-time	61%	75%
Household Income	\$60,000	\$61,000



Nonlocal Travel Distances

❖ Avg. one-way	259.6 miles	
❖ Min dist	13.5 miles	
❖ Max dist	2604 miles	
❖ 0-50miles	21%	
❖ 51-150 miles	25%	
❖ 151-250 miles	19%	
❖ > 250 miles	35%	
❖ Nights away trip	2.5	(max - 35)
❖ Spending party	4.2	(max - 45)



Nonlocal Expenditures

	<u>w/i 25 Miles</u>	<u>Total trip</u>
Lodging: avg.	\$75.03	\$109.53
range	0, 800	0, 1900
Food:	78.63	110.15
	0, 2400	0, 2900
Trans:	27.90	65.93
	0, 690	0, 1800
Trail:	24.03	24.73
	0, 300	0, 300
Other:	19.26	19.87
	0, 1000	0, 1000
TOTAL:	\$224.85	\$330.21



Some Conclusions about Winter Users

- ❖ **23,467 visits estimated 11/1/02 – 4/30/03**
- ❖ **Demographics of Local & Nonlocals similar**
- ❖ **Locals enter mainly in Abingdon -- majority walkers**
- ❖ **Nonlocals enter at Abingdon, Damascus, Whitetop – majority bikers**
- ❖ **Nonlocals spend twice as much time on trail per visit and cover 4 times the distance**



Winter Users (cont'd)

- ❖ Devoted users – Locals 12 visits monthly – Nonlocals 14 visits annually
- ❖ Locals spend about \$180 yr related to VCT use
- ❖ Nonlocals spend about \$330 per group per visit total -- \$220 in Grayson & Washington Co's
- ❖ Nonlocals travel an average of 250 miles to the VCT – 35% came from farther than 250 miles
- ❖ Trail rather than area attractions is major drawing card for Nonlocals



Winter Users (cont'd)

- ❖ 4 S's are most important to Locals & Nonlocals
 - Safety, Scenery, Surface, Structures
- ❖ Condition of 4 S's is between Good & Excellent
- ❖ Only 8% support paving VCT
- ❖ About 50% support electric golf carts for disabled users
- ❖ Very low support for other motorized uses



Winter Users (cont'd)

- ❖ All agree maintaining the VCT is important to attract visitors
- ❖ Lower support among Locals (32%) than Nonlocals (59%) for maintenance user fees
- ❖ Higher support among Locals (91%) than Nonlocals (74%) for maintenance funding via local taxes
- ❖ Both agree volunteers important for maintenance
- ❖ **STAY TUNED FOR SUMMER RESULTS!!**